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Carol X Weakley 12/04/2006 03:26:28 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Lebanon
- [1](#)2. Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Israel Radio reported that on Sunday the diplomatic-security cabinet adopted PM Ehud Olmert's view that the cease-fire must be reinforced. Ha'aretz cited the cabinet's decision that the IDF will no longer arrest Palestinians in the West Bank without explicit approval from either the OC Central Command or the commander of IDF forces in the territories. Ha'aretz and other media also reported that the cabinet urged stricter rules of engagement in the Gaza Strip. Maariv reported that contrary to Olmert and FM Tzipi Livni, Defense Minister Amir Peretz approves the IDF's stance that Qassam rocket fire must be countered. Yediot reported that the army is reducing its activity in the West Bank.

On Sunday most media emphasized Israel's concerns about the possibility of a coup in Lebanon. On Sunday Yediot wrote that Israeli officials have believed for a long time that Iran and Syria have set themselves the goal of overthrowing Fouad Siniora's government at any price. Today marks the fourth day of the peaceful siege of Siniora's office by thousands of demonstrators, with Hizbullah a dominant force among them. Media reported on some violent incidents between Shi'ites and Sunnis, in which a young Shi'ite man was shot to death on Sunday. The Jerusalem Post reported that the latter have begun to rally behind Siniora. Yediot reported that FM Livni told her colleagues not to publicly support Siniora. The Jerusalem Post reported that long-range missiles and truckloads of advanced anti-tank missiles from Iran and Syria have been smuggled to Hizbullah in Lebanon over the past four months. Leading media reported that on Sunday the security cabinet adopted the defense establishment's recommendation to withdraw IDF soldiers from the Lebanese side of Ghajar, a village straddling the border between the two countries. In place of the IDF troops, UN peacekeepers would be deployed.

The media reported that over the weekend several Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF did not respond. Israel Radio reported that this morning an Israeli man was stabbed in the West Bank village of Bidya.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post quoted EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana as saying on Saturday that Hamas has squandered an opportunity to end the international sanction imposed on the PA. Israel Radio quoted a senior Egyptian source as saying in an interview with the London-based Al-Hayat that there is a wide gap between the positions of Israel and Hamas regarding the issue of abducted IDF soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit.

On Sunday Maariv reported that FM Livni is examining an EU proposal to form an armed multi-national force that will be deployed in the Gaza Strip and will operate in a format similar to the one used by UNIFIL in southern Lebanon today. The newspaper said that Olmert is currently inclined to oppose the idea.

Over the weekend various media cited The Sunday Times of London as saying that Olmert will soon meet soon with officials in Riyadh in order to establish a peace treaty between Israel and Saudi Arabia. According to the report, Olmert met last September with Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, who is considered to be of King Abdullah's close advisers.

Ha'aretz reported that last week in Athens Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh (Labor Party) and a number of other defense-related personalities participated in an international seminar on the Middle East alongside Lebanese and Syrians. This was the first time Sneh participated in such an event in his current capacity.

Leading media reported that the GOI's anti-terror HQ has warned Israelis not to stay in the Sinai. The advisory follows an announcement by the Egyptian government that four Palestinian terrorists are roaming the area with a view to attacks Israelis.

Over the weekend the media reported that the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on Friday calling for the withdrawing of Israel from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The resolution passed by a large majority of 157. Seven countries voted against: Israel, the US, Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau. Ten members abstained.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel will not cooperate with a UN fact-finding mission to investigate last month's botched IDF shelling in the Gaza Strip that killed 19 people, but will not bar entry into the country to the mission's head, South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu.

On Sunday Hatzofe reported that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke skeptically over the course of the weekend about Israel's ability to continue to exist. In the course of a meeting between Ahmadinejad and Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in Doha, Qatar, the Iranian President said that the entire world knew that Israel had been planted in the Middle East in order to strengthen the hegemony of the colonialist countries and their control over the Islamic world. Hatzofe reported that Haniyeh thanked the Iranian government for its support on Palestine, and said that the popular Palestinian Intifada would continue until the occupation was lifted and Jerusalem was liberated.

On Sunday leading media reported that, in its first detailed response to the Peace Now report that alleged that 40 percent of the lands of the West Bank settlements are privately owned Palestinian lands, the Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories said that the report was an act of "fraud and deceit by means of which Peace Now tried to trick Israeli society and the international community in order to create pressure for a full withdrawal from the areas that Israel liberated in the Six-Day War."

Outgoing Israeli Ambassador to the US Daniel Ayalon was quoted as saying in any interview with Globes that Israel should give preferential treatment to US products such as Boeing aircraft. Ayalon also said that the Residence of the Israeli Ambassador in Washington should be demolished and replaced with a building corresponding to the needs of the 21st century.

Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday the GOI unanimously approved the establishment of a Ministry of Strategic Affairs, even though AG Menachem Mazuz wrote a legal opinion in which he points out that the authority of the office is ambiguous. Avigdor Lieberman has been in charge of the office.

Ha'aretz reported that the Israeli-Arab community is demanding the return to villages abandoned in 1948. The newspaper cited other demands, such as the modification of Israel's national flag and anthem. The newspaper reported on the role of the NGO The Mossawa Center - The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, in this development.

Ha'aretz reported that former Defense Ministry counsel and Mossad staffer Harold Katz has filed a USD 500,000 suit against the state in Jerusalem District Court. According to the attorney, the state prevented his travel to the US to recoup moneys seized by authorities there, due to concerns he would be interrogated regarding his role in the Jonathan Pollard affair.

Yediot reported that the low rate of the US dollar on the Israeli markets has created a crisis in real estate in the country.

The Jerusalem Post ran a Jewish Telegraphic Agency feature about General Motors' alleged collaboration with Nazi Germany.

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I. Lebanon:  
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Summary:  
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Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University and a senior expert on Syrian and Lebanese affairs, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The United States will also pay the price [for Syria's takeover of Lebanon], since the fall of Siniora will mark the end of its adventure in Lebanon and will also mark the path to the Americans' preparing to leave Iraq and the end of President Bush's vision of a new Middle East."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "It would be wise to move forward on an Israeli withdrawal from Sheba Farms, which would grant the Siniora government a diplomatic achievement. And more important ... is the conducting of effective negotiations with Syria."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Israel Will Pay the Price"

Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University and a senior expert on Syrian and Lebanese affairs, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/3): "At this stage, Nasrallah will settle for Siniora's acquiescence to some of his demands, the principal one of which is the establishment of a new government in which Nasrallah and his allies in the Shi'ite camp will have influence and the right to veto every decision. This is Nasrallah's goal for now, since in the long term he has wanted to rule Lebanon for a long time since the Shi'ite community is the largest in the country. But Nasrallah has patience, and he is willing to wait until conditions are ripe for the big move. Prime Minister Siniora is behaving with extraordinary courage right now in the face of Nasrallah's threatening display.... [However], if the supporters of Syria indeed regain control of Lebanon, those who will pay the price will be those same courageous Lebanese who hoped that Lebanon would embark on the path of democracy and liberty. The next to pay the price will be Israel, which will discover that while it succeeded in driving Hizbullah away from the northern border, it has gotten it as the kingmaker of Lebanese politics and of the next government in Beirut. In the end, the United States will also pay the price, since the fall of Siniora will mark the end of its adventure in Lebanon and will also mark the path to the Americans' preparing to leave Iraq and the end of President Bush's vision of a new Middle East."

II. "A Test of Strength in Lebanon"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/3): "The demonstrations launched by Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut are meant to topple Fouad Siniora's elected government and replace it with a new one. The immediate pretext was the Siniora government's approval of a resolution to establish an international tribunal to try those responsible for the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in February 2005.... But it seems that the argument over the tribunal is merely serving as a launching pad for Nasrallah's political ambitions.... This is a situation in which the international community, which mobilized quickly to adopt Resolutions 1559 and 1701, cannot behave as a mere bystander, watching as the progress achieved in Lebanon is blown to bits. The Siniora government currently needs more than declarations of support. A meeting of donor states, which would help the Lebanese government to extricate itself from the economic crisis that engulfed it after the war, is an urgent necessity. At the same time, it would be wise to move forward on an Israeli withdrawal from Sheba Farms, which would grant the Siniora government a diplomatic achievement. And more important than either of these is the conducting of effective negotiations with Syria, whose goal would be to remove Syria's label as an 'evil state' that supports terror in exchange for its keeping its hands off Lebanon, completely and

permanently. This is a task of the greatest importance if the international community, the region and Israel do not wish to see the start of another local war."

## 12. Mideast:

### Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "There are some situations in which you have to grit your teeth, close your eyes, plug your ears and employ restraint. We are in the middle of such a situation."

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The urgent need to bolster a coalition of pragmatists, lend added importance to a settlement with the Palestinians. This is a wonderful opportunity to hold Olmert to his word."

Former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "The most urgent issue facing the United States and Israel ... is whether they can find common ground with [the moderate] Arab countries, which are threatened by Iran's move to achieve regional hegemony."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "If we don't try [to counter the anti-Israeli mood around the world], nothing will improve and Israel will have an increasingly hard time winning acceptance, attracting tourism, selling its products, conducting scientific research or engaging in cultural dialogue -- in short, keeping its rightful place among the family of nations."

### Block Quotes:

#### 1I. "Grit Our Teeth"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/4): "There are some situations in which you have to grit your teeth, close your eyes, plug your ears and employ restraint. We are in the middle of such a situation.... Anyone who heard Javier Solana, Condoleezza Rice, the foreign ministers of Germany and Austria praising Israel's restraint, realize that sometimes you have to deposit some credit in the bank, instead of spending it. Therefore, better not to use aspirin against terror now, so that we can perform emergency surgery, in field conditions, with a lot of blood and tension, later on. That's the truth. Why will there apparently be a military operation in Gaza? Because there is no other choice. Why must we not agree to a cease-fire in the West Bank? Because a month afterwards Qassam rockets will start falling on Kfar Sava. The figures show, clearly, that Hamas has made a strategic decision to link up with Iran, to assimilate completely the Iranian strategy and become an obedient branch of the Revolutionary Guards on our doorstep. Since the American pressure started, with the closing of the Saudi charity and the international siege, Iran has become Hamas's number one fund provider. Hamas members go to Iran, train, and return to Gaza through Egypt with instructions, with new abilities and with plans. In Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank], the Hamas infrastructure has been smashed. Any break in IDF activity there would link Hamas's 'land of ability' in Gaza with the 'land of possibility' in the West Bank. This would be a fatal link that would turn central Israel into a battlefield. And therefore, we cannot allow this to happen. And therefore, we have to employ a little restraint right now. For later."

#### II. "Hold Olmert to His Word"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/4): "If there is any credibility to Olmert's words, then the man who rebelled against his leader, Menachem Begin, and who opposed the first Camp David agreement, has undergone a major ideological revolution.... It is possible that... the words were all talk and spin. It is possible that the Sde Boker address was aimed at the ears of the gentile George Bush, and of the

gentiles in Europe.... [Whatever the case may be], the growing threat of the spread of radical Islam in the Middle East and the urgent need to bolster a coalition of pragmatists, lend added importance to a settlement with the Palestinians. This is a wonderful opportunity to hold Olmert to his word."

### III. "Facing a Piping Hot Middle East"

Former US Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk wrote in Yediot Aharonot (12/4): "In his speech at the remembrance ceremony for David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered the Palestinians an olive leaf. But the address also contained another, less conspicuous but more important peace proposal: an offer to the Arab states, which he invited as full partners with Israel and the Palestinians in making peace, based on the 'positive' details in the 2002 Saudi peace plan.... The most urgent issue facing the United States and Israel ... is whether they can find common ground with [the moderate] Arab countries, which are threatened by Iran's move to achieve regional hegemony. This will be the focus of discussions next week in Washington at the Saban Forum between senior American and Israelis officials and experts. This is also the context in which Olmert's offer to the Arab countries should be understood. The only effective strategy facing the Iran-Syria-Hizbullah axis is the construction of an alliance of moderate countries and leaders that have similar views, and which would include the US, Israel and those Arab states."

### IV. "Branding Israel"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/4): "Like corporate products, nations too can be regarded as brand-names and their standing in the international marketplace evaluated according to a wide range of criteria. That is what the Anholt Nation Brands Index does four times annually for 36 nations. This time Israel too was tested and it came a cropper -- last among the 36 and close to rock-bottom in all categories examined.... Though the odds undeniably weigh heavily against Israel, given how long we have neglected the task, there is no excuse for failing to mount a spirited counter-offensive.... Anholt predicts that even the cleverest counter-offensive may take 30 years to yield tangible results. Perhaps, but we can at least try for a quicker turnaround. One thing is certain: If we don't try, nothing will improve and Israel will have an increasingly hard time winning acceptance, attracting tourism, selling its products, conducting scientific research or engaging in cultural dialogue -- in short, keeping its rightful place among the family of nations."

JONES